# Bangalore Mirror

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## Construction workers' 14-yr-old son takes up teacher's challenge, develops humanoid

By Apurva Venkat, Bangalore Mirror Bureau | Aug 31, 2015, 04.00 AM IST



*Aravind from Viveknagar Government School with his humanoi*

A shy 14-year-old boy from a government Telugu school carried his 'friend' in his arms to a place where he became the centre of attraction on Sunday, triggering 'wows' and gasps of surprise from those witnessing what his 'friend' did.

The boy is Aravind Reddy Y, the son of parents who work as construction workers; the location was the 10th Robot Olympiad at Visvesvaraya Industrial & Technological Museum (VITM) on Kasturba Road; and his 'friend' (hold your breath), a humanoid with sensors, completely built by Aravind on being challenged by his teacher. The humanoid walked up to every visitor who came in front of him, saluted and said 'Hello' before returning.

There were more than 30 robots and 90 students 8gathered for the 10th Indian Robot Olympiad at the VITM, but all eyes were on the humanoid and Aravind, who studies in Std VIII of Seva Bharat Trust Government School in Viveknagar, a Telugu medium school.

Interestingly, until a year ago, Aravind had never used a computer; today he walks around with a humanoid he has created completely on his own. There is a reason for that: Seva Bharat Trust Government School has a robotic lab running in their premises for the last one year. Robotics is a regular subject that is now being taught in the government school with 120 students by an alumni of Indian Institute of Science (IISC), 32-year-old Sridhar P.

It was Sridhar who challenged Aravind after a competition in Delhi last month to make a humanoid that would shake hands with people.

While Sridhar subsequently forgot about the challenge, Aravind would sit extra three hours every day for a month. No one knew what he was doing and they assumed he was just practising. Then one day, he walked up to Sridhar and asked: "Can a hand waving out 'Hi' be considered equal to a handshake?" It was then that Aravind revealed to Sridhar his humanoid - whom he has not named yet - that senses when someone is in front of it before walking up to the person, salutes, then waves his hand out saying 'Hello'.

"I just made it because my teacher gave it to me as a challenge. It is a completely new world I have entered and the fact that I am creating things that work and move makes me feel very good. The reason for this is my teacher and I would do anything he asks me to," says Aravind about Sridhar.

The boy's dedication to academics, especially robotics, is such that despite his modest financial background forcing him to do away with bus or auto to reach school, he walks every day from Marathahalli, where he lives, to his school in Viveknagar - a distance of 12 km one way!

His interest in school has gone up even more now: "Initially, I joined this school because it was the nearest Telugu medium government school for me. But today, I love my school for the robots I make."

The skills in robotics that he developed over the last year, gave the boy who walks from home to school every day an opportunity to travel on a flight in July. "Last month, I went to Delhi for a competition. It was the first time I travelled on a flight. My father also came along. My mother and father do not understand what I do or make but are just proud of me. My father just cannot stop telling people that he travelled on a flight because of his son. My whole neighbourhood is proud of me, they all know me as a guy who makes machines," says Aravind, who is known as 'Master Creator' in his school.

Aravind now is working on making the humanoid a robotic personal assistant, besides making robotic string puppets.

### The motherly push towards robotics

*Archana Rajalabandi, 37, finished her engineering years ago but eight years back went back to studying - she did a one month course in Robotics and then for the next eight years tried, experimented and researched everything she could about the subject. Archana, a resident of Basaveshwara Nagar, now says, "As an engineer I never got a platform to showcase my talent (in robotics). I did not want the same to happen to my son and decided on learning it. Today I spend three hours every day teaching and practicing robotics." Archana's son Rishi along with his team mates Anand Orcade, Sreenidi Malay have qualified for the national level championship for the second time in a row. Rishi, 10, says, "Learning robotics with my mother is complete fun. I feel like I am making toys with my mother. As soon as I finish my homework, mom and I start off. I will one day create a robot that can get converted to a car or a bike or a helicopter."*

### Ensuring that trophy remains in the family

*Until last year 11-year-old Sandeep Reehal had to share his trophy with partners. But this year Sandeep has made sure the trophy came home by making his sister Riya his teammate in the elementary level competition at the 10th Robot Olympiad at VITM. The siblings are from Green Wood High School. This is the third time that Sandeep is winning the trophy and qualifying for the Nationals. Sandeep has been coding for the last two years and seeing her brother win laurels in the act, his little sister joined in. Riya Reehal is just eight years old and has already started coding. Riya, said, "The fact that my brother is an expert in it makes the competition easier and we can actually practise any time at home. This works in our favour." Says Sandeep: "I would win and not have the trophy forever, I would have to share the trophy always. I want to see it forever in the showcase of my house. What better option than making my sister a teammate!"*

### Robotic dream girls

*Santhoshamma and Keertana P may not be dressed in the coolest of the clothes or even able to speak English. But they are dreamers. They dream about making it big in robotics. Both 11-year-old girls from Telugu medium Seva Bharat Trust Government School in Viveknagar, have changed their timing at the robotic lab as they cannot stay back after school as the parents and teachers are concerned about their safety security, says Santhoshamma. They do two hours in the mornings before regular school begins. They were part of the only team at the 10th Robot Olympiad at VITM to have two girls in a team of three despite several topnotch schools, including a few international ones, participating there. Keertana feels that a day will come in future when the world would know her as a person who created a robot like no one else has before and all the pains taken today will be worth it then. "My parents do not understand the meaning of coding or robots, but I will make a robot that will make my mom's work easy."*

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